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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S AUGUST 11 MEETING WITH KARZAI:  
GAINING TRACTION ON THE COMPACT

REF: KABUL 02304

Classified By: Ambassador Karl Eikenberry for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: In my August 11 meeting with President Karzai, I reiterated the importance of moving forward on post-election goals, including creating a compact with the international community. I emphasized that a return of Dostum to Afghanistan would be unacceptable to the United States and most of the international community, and would endanger future international support for the new Afghan government. Although Karzai's re-election remains his immediate priority, he was more willing than in past weeks to focus on a compact. He also appears to be assimilating that our long-term commitment to Afghanistan hinges on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIROA) commitment and ability to combat corruption and that we must establish sets of mutual responsibilities and agreements to achieve this objective. Finally, Karzai concurred that the best measure of a genuine and worthy compact with the international community would be his ability to forge a successful compact with the Afghan people. End Summary.

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Pushing Back on Dostum  
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¶2. (S/NF) During an hour and a half conversation -- the first half attended by Karzai's Presidential Chief of Staff, Daudzai and his Deputy National Security Advisor Shaida -- Karzai appeared a bit tired, but confident, and more analytical than he was in last week's meeting. Karzai raised two issues in the presence of his two advisers: Dostum's desire to return to Afghanistan to support Karzai in the final days of the election campaign and Karzai's interest in meeting with political rival Ashraf Ghani in a "neutral site" to discuss the possibility of his joining Karzai's future cabinet. At the start of the meeting, Karzai told me that Dostum has been calling him frequently to seek his permission to return to Afghanistan to allow him to help in the final stretch of the presidential campaign. Karzai explained that Dostum could help end problems in Uzbek-dominated areas and unite the Uzbeks behind Karzai's candidacy. Dostum had informed him that U.S. officials supported his bid to return to Afghanistan. However, when I asked for the names of these officials, Daoud sheepishly replied that "maybe someone from the CIA" had made the recommendation.

¶3. (S/NF) I was emphatic that no USG official in a position of authority would have conveyed this message and unequivocal that Dostum's return would be a serious mistake that Karzai would have to live with. I reminded Karzai that Afghans and foreigners at large believe he has two valuable attributes, namely that he serves as the symbol of national unity and as a credible bridge to the international community. Despite some damage to his reputation over the past year and a half or so, more recently, there were signs that Karzai was

rebuilding his image. Allowing Dostum to return would undoubtedly destroy Karzai's reputation and the international community would reject such a measure. I added that I was unsure what actions the international community would take on pending charges against Dostum. Further, Dostum's return would endanger much of the progress made in Afghanistan over the past five years, create a source of friction in the Afghan government's relations with the international community, and could well cost Karzai's government the continued support of the United States and most of the international community.

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. . . And Leaving Ghani to Karzai  
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¶4. (S/NF) Karzai yet again solicited my views on whether he should meet with political rival Ashraf Ghani in a "neutral" venue to discuss the possibility of his joining the next Karzai government, and if we believed Ghani would be a valuable political asset. I replied that the decision is Karzai's to make, clarifying that the United States is interested in the quality and professional capabilities of the people that will comprise the new Afghan government, not the individuals per se.

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Gaining Traction on the Compact  
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¶5. (S/NF) Following the departure of Karzai's aides, I informed him that I would meet with his political rival Abudllah to discuss the proposed compact with the new Afghanistan administration later the same day. I then remarked that, while Karzai's obsession with the August 20 elections was understandable, the United States harbors its own "obsessions" vis a vis Afghanistan. While among the American public there is general consensus that we must help the Afghan people achieve progress, our fundamental concern is that Afghanistan acquire the attributes of a nation that can harden itself against the threats of Al Qaeda and its Taliban allies so that together we may avoid another September 10 scenario. Specifically, Americans are concerned about two issues. First, when will our troops no longer lead the fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and instead, will support, likely for decades to come, Afghan efforts to this effect? Second, will we see positive returns for our investment in helping Afghanistan combat widespread corruption and strengthen rule of law and good governance?

¶6. (S/NF) Referring to the five essential pillars of an eventual Afghan government-international community compact -- namely, sovereignty; reintegration/amnesty; governance/anti-corruption; economic development; and, Afghanistan's regional status -- I remarked that all are closely linked, in particular the first three. Specifically, Afghanistan needs to take the lead in the fighting and in achieving amnesty and reintegration in accordance with the Afghan Constitution. A receptive Karzai noted his particular interest in working the amnesty issue and in increasing cooperation with Pakistan to achieve regional stability. I assured Karzai that Washington is engaged in these topics at senior levels. He suggested Defense Minister Wardak could take the lead for the Afghans on these issues.

¶7. (S/NF) Emphasizing the link between security and governance, I reminded Karzai that our long-term commitment to Afghanistan hinges on the GIRA's commitment and ability to combat corruption and that we need to establish sets of mutual responsibilities and agreements to achieve this objective. I suggested establishing an Afghan anti-corruption commission that would include international participation. I mentioned that the United States is interested in investing in additional critical ministries, possibly the Ministry of Energy and Water. However, any investments in additional ministries must make good business sense, which requires capable ministerial leadership. I

clarified that our current concerns about the Ministry of Energy and Water's leadership are not personal, but from a business perspective, capable and qualified leadership is essential. Karzai offered to establish a new "justice and development" team to address these concerns. He said Director General of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) Popal and Minister Wardak will put together a group and advise us of its proposed composition within the next few days.

18. (S/NF) Expanding on the importance of a compact, I noted that, while the Bonn Agreement and other previous accords were based on general principles, this new compact should focus on measurable objectives and clear responsibilities. I emphasized that creating an effective compact will require bilateral (e.g., detention), NATO (security forces), and broader international (e.g., corruption) participation and buy in. Karzai enthusiastically welcomed my suggestion that after reaching agreement on the compact it could be blessed in an international Conference of Ministers, perhaps with the participation of the U.S. Secretary of State and her counterparts. In closing, I reminded Karzai that the most important compact of all will be his compact with the Afghan people; its success would be the best reassurance that Afghanistan's compact with the international community is genuine and worthwhile.

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